

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE **A1**

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## Wave of Arab Migration Ending With Oil Boom

The following article is based on reporting by John Kifner and Judith Miller and was written by Miss Miller

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CAIRO — More than a million migrant Arabs working in countries throughout the Middle East are being forced to return home, in large part because of the end of the decadelong oil boom.

The development, which is bringing to an end the largest Arab migration in modern Middle Eastern history, holds potentially grave consequences for economic and political stability and

United States interests in the region, according to Arab and American officials and diplomats, as well as experts on migration and politics in nine Middle East countries.

These sources said that the projected return home of 1 million to 1.5 million migrant workers by the end of 1986 and a sharp decline in remittances, the amount of money the workers send home, would be of particular concern in the region's poorer countries, including Egypt and Jordan.

### Rise of Extremism Feared

Officials said they were also concerned that large numbers of frustrated, unemployed workers who once enjoyed high incomes and even higher economic expectations may be increasingly drawn to Islamic fundamentalism or other forms of political extremism.

A study completed last summer by the Central Intelligence Agency concluded that the return of hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers to their home countries posed a particular threat to the stability of United States allies in the region — Egypt, Jordan, the Sudan and Yemen, all of which have been major exporters of labor to the Persian Gulf.

The C.I.A. study has not been made public, but details of it were made available to a reporter. It did not make specific policy recommendations, but since it was completed United States embassies in the region have stepped up efforts to collect reliable data on migration and remittances, officials said.

"This is one of the most critical, least studied and potentially explosive developments in our region's modern history," said Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a pro-

fessor at the University in Cairo who heads the Arab Thought Forum, a research center in Jordan.

"It's a demographic time bomb," said Judith Kipper of the American Enterprise Institute in Washington.

Mohammed Sid Ahmed, a political analyst who writes for the Cairo opposition newspaper Al Ahali and for the semiofficial daily Al Ahram, said that "the number of Moslem extremists is tiny."

But, he added, "As economic frustrations mount, a triggering minority and a discontent majority that is culturally sympathetic to Islamic values and goals and which has no hope that the Government will help them, is an explosive combination."

"This migration has uprooted and dislocated people as never before," he said. "But its end is even more dangerous. What initially seemed an outlet for economic frustration is destined now to fuel it."

Arab and Western diplomats in Cairo said the implications were particularly critical for Egypt, which accounts for 43 percent of all Arab migrant laborers. The Egyptian Government has said that its workers abroad sent home \$3.3 billion last year. Egyptian officials say the sum is the country's single most important source of foreign currency; unofficial estimates put the figure even higher, at \$6 billion to \$10 billion a year.

The decline in jobs has already prompted requests from Egypt for increased United States aid to offset the drop in remittances, according to American officials in Washington.

At least 500,000 of the 2.5 million to 3.5 million workers who have migrated from Egypt to the Persian Gulf countries and other Middle Eastern lands are likely to be sent home within the next year, and 2 million within the next five years, according to Professor Ibrahim.

Kamal Ganzouri, Egypt's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning, offered a different assessment, saying 100,000 workers or more would permanently return by the end of 1986 and probably only 800,000 in the next five years. The Government was planning for their return in its next five-year development plan, which begins July 1987, he said.

"Since we have severe labor shortages in several sectors, our problem is not their return per se," Mr. Ganzouri said. "It is where they will go when they return. We're trying to build new communities in the desert because Cairo simply can't handle any more people."

### Pressure Is Widespread

In Libya, according to resident diplomats, more than one-third of the foreign workers have already been laid off or pushed out. At their peak in 1983, an estimated total of 400,000 foreign laborers made up more than 45 percent of the work force and sent more than \$2 billion a year to their home countries.

Sudanese officials said earlier this year that the 200,000 Sudanese migrant workers, some in Egypt and the majority in the gulf, had generated \$1 billion in remittances in 1984. Although only a fraction was channeled through the official banking system, they said, remittances were a key source of hard currency, the loss of which could be disastrous for the transitional military Government that overthrew President Gaafar al-Nimeiry last spring.

The 400,000 Yemenis earning wages in Saudi Arabia have provided Yemen with its largest source of hard currency for a decade, according to Yemeni officials and diplomats in Sana, the capital. In 1983, official remittances totaled \$1.2 billion, compared with the \$10 million Yemen earned that year from exports.

In Jordan, more than one-third of the labor force is working abroad. As a result of these remittances, the Jordanian economy had flourished until recently. Also until recently, more than 120,000 Egyptians worked in Jordan, most of them in agriculture and service jobs.

The sharp contraction of opportunities in the Persian Gulf has begun to force the departure of these workers as well, reducing the number of Egyptians in Jordan to between 80,000 and 90,000, diplomats said. They said many Egyptians were being replaced by Palestinians who had lost lucrative jobs in the gulf region.

Diplomats estimated that from 1.2 million to 1.5 million Egyptians have been working in Iraq for several years, taking on the work of farmers, civil servants, office workers, teachers and coffee-servers, working in restaurants and hotels, and even serving as soldiers at the front. Although the Egyptian and Iraqi Governments deny this, senior Egyptian officials said 35,000 Egyptians who were said to be volunteers were fighting in the Iran-Iraq war.

Because of the war, almost half of the jobs in Iraq are being performed by Egyptians, according to officials in Cairo and Baghdad. Should the war end, many would be forced to return home, they said. But for now, the diplomats said, Iraq was the only oil-producing nation in the region in which workers were not being laid off or expelled in large numbers and were unlikely to face such problems.

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